MARGARET WAY

THE WATUMULL FOUNDATION ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Margaret Way

(1893 - 1980)

Miss Way, a native of West Hartford, Connecticut, attended Mount Holyoke College and the New England Conservatory of Music before coming to Hawaii in 1917 to her first piano teaching assignment at Punahou School. At that time, the music department occupied Old School Hall, the first building to be constructed on campus.

Miss Way also taught music at Hilo High School and McKinley High School before retiring from the public school system to conduct private piano and organ lessons. Among her pupils at McKinley High School was the Reverend Abraham A. Akaka.

She has been an organist for various churches in the Islands and was an active member of the prestigious Morning Music Club.

In this interview, Miss Way discusses many facets of the field of music in Hawaii and those associated with them.

Lynda Mair, Interviewer

# INTERVIEW WITH MARGARET WAY

At her Pohai Nani apartment, 45-090 Namoku Street, Kaneohe, 96744

Sometime in 1971

W: Margaret Way

M: Lynda Mair, Interviewer

M: One thing that I need to get before we get started is just a little bit of background about who you are, how you came to Hawaii, et cetera.

W: Um hm. (loud tick-tock of clock in background)

M: Okay? So maybe we could just start with giving me your full complete name.

W: Margaret Way. W-A-Y.

M: Um hm. And where were you born?

W: I was born in West Hartford, Connecticut.

M: You were educated, then, on the mainland.

W: In Connecticut and Massachusetts.

M: Uh huh. What schools did you go to?

W: Well, my college was Mount Holyoke in Massachusetts and then I went to the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston and I took a diploma there as a piano teacher.

M: Who did you study with?

W: Well, my piano teacher was Richard Stevens and I studied with Louis C. Elson, who was well-known at that time as a writer of books about music--appreciation, the theory and acoustics and all sorts of subjects like that--and also as a translator of songs--the words of songs--from foreign languages into English. It was quite hard at that time to find good English translations.

M: Could you spell it?

W: Louis? L-O-U-I-S. His initial was C. Elson. E-L-S-O-N.

M: That name sort of sounds familiar for some reason. I'm a musician too.

W: Oh.

M: I'm a pianist.

W: The head of the piano teaching division was a Mr. Porter--Hugh Porter, I think--and the work that I had there in connection with class piano was of value to me later at McKinley High School. I was in the music department there after awhile and I had piano classes in the high school and I'd have about forty pupils usually--or more; forty-four perhaps to start with the beginning of the year--and I met them every day.

M: All forty?

W: Yes.

M: At one time? (clears throat)

W: All forty-four. And I tried not to have them take a piano course unless they had a piano in their own home to practice on, but they would beg to come into the class and they'd say, "Oh, I can practice at the neighbor's next door," or "I can practice at the church," or something like that but it never worked well because, you know, well, it would waste time to go to another place. If you have a piano in your own home you can get in a good many more minutes now and then during the day to practice. And then sometimes somebody would be sick in the other house or they'd have company sitting in the living room next to the piano so then they couldn't practice. But if they did have pianos at home and could practice a little every day, they could do as much in a school year in the class as they would do with a private piano teacher. Some of them did and I presented two of them at the--oh, what do they call them, trials or hearings?

M: The guild auditions?

W: Yes, that the piano teachers had one year and the judges were very much surprised at how much they had been able to learn. They played easy things by Bach and Mozart, nothing difficult, but they did them nicely, you know. And I tried to give them some music etiquette and they knew how

to get onto a piano stool and off (Lynda chuckles), make a little bow at the right time and that sort of thing. A good many of them when they came would sit down at the piano and put their feet on the board that comes down toward the pedals, you know. 'Course that drove me wild (Lynda chuckles) and I tried to break them of that. There were all sorts of things that I taught them.

And one day a week we had theory and I taught them some composition and I have a composition that I saved because it was so good of, well, two or three people. One of them was Reverend [Abraham K.] Akaka.

M: Oh, really?

W: Um hm. He was my star baritone for awhile while he was in McKinley. I taught boys' chorus also and always had a special picked quartet--male quartet--and I would take them around to some of the ladies' clubs and the men's clubs, like the Rotary and the Chamber of Commerce. The boys enjoyed it and it was some entertainment for these people.

And one time I took a group of boys with the orchestra instruments, like the oboe and the bassoon that a good many people never see close to them, and I took them to D.A.R. [Daughters of the American Revolution] (Lynda laughs) and the D.A.R. ladies were very much interested. They thought that was wonderful because they'd been to symphonies all their lives but they'd never seen those instruments close.

M: Maybe you could back up a little bit and tell me how you got here. What made you come to Hawaii? (recorder goes off then comes on again) Go ahead.

W: Oh, when I finished that course at the New England Conservatory, I put my name in at a teachers' agency to try to find a position and they had three on file that were all ready for me. One was in Rhode Island, which of course was near my home in Connecticut; and one was down south--I can't remember where; and the other one was at Punahou [School] and I wanted to travel so of course I took that one. So I arrived in--'course we had to use ships then and the war had just started. It was 1917 and so the ship schedule was all mixed up in the Pacific, as well as the Atlantic, so the boat on which I had booked was taken off to take soldiers--used as a transport--and so the passenger list for two boats were put together on one and we were terribly crowded. 'Course the plumbing went bad sometimes (Lynda chuckles) and we couldn't have lights on the ship because they were afraid there might be German submarines in the Pacific [Ocean], but the orchestra could

play some of their dance music pretty well without notes, you know--without any lights--and so they would play evenings in the dark on the deck and young people could dance there without any artificial light.

And we arrived here September 1st and there was a wonderful bloom of night-blooming cereus that first night I was here. It was all along the side of the Punahou grounds on Wilder and also up the hill--up Punahou [Street]. Of course it was just gorgeous for all of us newcomers. There were several other teachers who came over who were new here.

As a rule Punahou had teachers who had some experience but in my case, well, I'd had college as well as music training and that was rather unusual in those days.

M: Oh, really?

W: Um hm. A great many of the (Lynda coughs) music teachers for schools went from high school to a conservatory.

M: Oh, I see. And then you'd have a general college background in addition.

W: No, but they had to take some English and if they were singers, of course, they had to take French and German and I don't know just what else and it was a three-year course at New England Conservatory, if they had not been to college. But as I had college, they would have been perfectly willing to let me get through in two years but I said I didn't have money enough to pay my board and room and stay there for two years and so they let me get through in one and a half. (Lynda chuckles)

And there was one girl who lived here who was studying, my last year, at the conservatory and when she heard that I was going to be over here, she was very nice to me and gave me her name so that I could look her up but she knew I was coming. Honolulu was a small town then, you know, and she could find out from Punahou people when the new teachers were coming and so she invited me to her house that very first afternoon and then to stay to dinner and her brother escorted me home and he just made a point of showing me the hedge, you know, and picked one flower for me and I was very much thrilled about it.

And they had beautiful royal palms at the entrance to Punahou then--a double row of royal palms both sides of the driveway that was inside the campus, parallel with Wilder [Avenue]--and, well, we people who came from Temperate Zone were just oh-so-excited and thrilled about the palms that were on each side.

M: Where did you live then, at the. . . ?

W: Castle Hall.

M: Oh, I see. Did all of the teachers stay there then?

W: No, that was the girls' dormitory and for the unmarried women teachers. I think they had some small cottages around for married teachers. And there was a boys' dorm next door. I think the boys stayed upstairs over the dining hall, which was in Dole Hall. I'm not sure if they have a Dole Hall now. But they don't have a boarding department, I think.

M: What's that?

W: They don't have a boarding department now, do they?

M: No, they quit that a number of years ago.

W: Well, they had a beautiful lily pond. I think perhaps they still have it now.

M: Yes. [The Thurston Memorial Chapel was built over the lily pond in the 1960's, incorporating the pond into the architecture and the landscaping.]

W: But it's hard to get to see it. We used to drive our tourist friends in there, drive all around the campus and show them the lily pond, but after awhile they closed up the roads and had one-way traffic in various places so now we can't get in to show them everything.

M: Yeh, it's quite a challenge to find your way around even now; you end up going around and around. My oldest boy studies with one of the teachers there and so I'm always running in to get him. Maybe you can tell me something about the music school then, when you first came.

W: Well, the music building was the Old School Hall, the first building that was on the campus.

M: Oh, I know where that one is.

W: Um hm. They use it for something else now. I'm not sure. Is it for offices?

M: I don't know.

W: And I had a room upstairs and the violin teacher had a room upstairs and it seems to me the other rooms up there were not occupied, but downstairs Margaret Clarke had two or three rooms that had been thrown together. She was the

head of the department and she had a grand piano of her own in there, as well as one provided by the school, and she'd furnished it with some antiques and it was a very pleasant place and we had our pupils' recitals there in that room at that time.

And then there was another piano teacher downstairs, Lillian Parrish, and a voice teacher, Helen Cadwell, and I don't know of any others. Oh, the violin teacher the first year I was there. I think according to their book, that catalogue or whatever they call it [the Punahou School Directory], Edwin Ideler was there from about 1917 to '21 but he was on leave, I think, for the war. He was in uniform some of the time I know and I think he went away. And they had a Marie Thompson as violin teacher, I think the second year I was there.

M: So there was Mrs. Parrish. . .

W: Parrish. I think there were two R's in it. I-S-H. Lillian.

M: And Cadwell. What was her first name?

W: Helen Cadwell.

M: And who was the head of the department?

W: The head?

M: Yes.

W: Margaret E. Clarke. The E stood for Electra and I think there's an E on the end of Clarke. (gets up to get the catalogue and recorder is turned off and on again)

M: Maybe you could tell me now about the students you had or the size of the enrollment in the music department.

W: I can't remember how many were in the whole department. I had. . .

M: Did you teach all day?

W: Yes. Oh, sometimes there was free time during the school hours but with the junior high and senior high, if they had study periods they could come over and take lessons in that time. But we taught before school so we started quite early in the morning and taught after school and we were scheduled four days a week. Wednesday and Saturday were days when we could make up lessons if the pupils had been sick or if we'd been sick or absent for any reason.

M: I see. How much did Punahou charge for a lesson in those days?

W: Well, we were paid a salary every month.

M: Oh, I see.

W: And I can't remember how much people had to pay.

M: I'm just curious because they're charging now, I think it's five dollars a lesson.

W: Well, it wasn't that. Probably wasn't more than two at that time. And the parents were very friendly at that time and hospitable and most parents wanted to meet all the teachers of their children, so they would invite us to their homes for tea or for dinner or perhaps a beach party, something like that.

The music teachers there were in demand in Morning Music Club--they had that way back there--and if anybody was sick or got cold feet and wanted to back out, then they always telephoned to us the last minute (Lynda laughs) and we had to be prepared to go in and do something.

M: Did you keep up your own playing then?

W: Well, we had to in order to. . .

M: What other opportunities, besides the music club, did you have to play?

W: Well, I had to give a recital in the fall and now, you know, the music school at Punahou presents the new teachers always in recitals. If not a full recital, then they share in a program. I usually go to hear them. At least I did up till now. I may not go in now. It's harder to go in at night.

M: Yes, uh huh.

W: One place where the Morning Music Club met that I remember was the Frear house. Mrs. Frear called it Arcadia then, she always did, and she was very hospitable; liked to have things brought in--groups--at her house. She liked to entertain them and of course it was a lovely place to go.

M: I'll bet it was.

W: And we had a chance to go and hear chamber music sometimes in the homes of people who had large houses and loved music and there wasn't any real symphony at that time, but

I've been told that a man, I think named Royal Meade, started with chamber groups and it seems to me the von Holts on, well, perhaps it was Judd Street somewhere in Nuuanu quite often had nice concerts in their home. Teachers would be invited quite often.

M: Were you ever in the Straub home?

W: Straub? No, I'm talking about way back fifty years ago.

M: (chuckling) I think this house was there then. I'm not sure but Dr. [George F.] Straub was a friend of ours that had a huge home up in Manoa and he built violins himself. He had quite a collection and he had a fantastic piano--a Gregg-Stein; concert size Gregg-Stein--and I got to play it a few times. The place looked to me like it must have been at least fifty years old. It was on seven acres.

W: Well, did somebody else live in it first?

M: (clears throat) No, I don't think so. I think he had it built. You know, he's the Dr. Straub at The Clinic [now the Straub Clinic and Hospital, Inc. in 1979] and he died.

W: Well, I didn't know his name at all until the thirties, I guess. That must be forty years ago.

M: Yeh, well, at any rate can you tell me more about how the school developed and changes that took place from time to time or, you know, interesting things that happened?

W: Well, I stayed there only two years.

M: Oh, I see. You were just there two years.

W: And then I went back to the mainland to Connecticut, stayed with my parents five years, and my father died. And I wanted to come back here and my mother didn't care where she went so long as she was with me and she thought she'd come over and try it anyway and she liked it too, so it was our home always after that.

But for five years, from 1924 to 1929, we were over in Hilo and I had put my name in here with the Department of Public Instruction, as it was called then, for substitute teaching in the schools because, well, I'd been teaching some English and the public school music in Connecticut. I had certificates for both of those and I wanted to work up a class of piano pupils--private--with private lessons and it takes quite awhile to do that, you know. And I wanted an organ position. I'd played an organ ever since I was sixteen in different churches and I thought I

could, well, make ends meet before long, but I did want the school position and when the department saw my education credentials, they wanted me to go over to Hilo and teach the public school music there because they didn't have a regular teacher. They'd had somebody who came in only at noon and taught any people who cared to give up their lunch hour, you know, but it wasn't very satisfactory for anybody concerned. And they had that rule that people in high school must be college graduates--I mean the teachers--and they were having a hard time to get college graduates because, I told you, you know, that girls that took public school music usually hadn't been to college in those days. And they offered me, oh, a much higher salary than I'd ever had before, so I went over there and stayed five years.

And I enjoyed that island very much. It was very rustic and we could drive out anywhere along the beach and find our own little cove, with the lava rocks going out on the sides and a sandy beach and perhaps some trees and we could dress and undress in the car. Everybody did it then.

M: Uh huh. What was the musical life in Hilo like?

W: Well, there wasn't very much there. I don't think they had any music club. I played in the Christian Science Church there some and in the Episcopal Church in Hilo. And then, oh, the Haili Choir--Haili Church--was there, the native church, and they had a beautiful chorus and they used to practice every day.

And after awhile, my mother became the matron of the King's Daughters Home over there. It was for young girls who wanted to come to Hilo to go to high school because there wasn't any high school between Hilo and Kohala or over at Kona Waena. There were just three high schools on the island and so the girls would come in there. Had to have someone managing the house, of course, and chaperoning. And I would go there sometimes after school and have dinner with my mother and I could lie down to rest after school and listen to the choir practicing and it was just beautiful music.

They sometimes came over--perhaps they do still--for a yearly contest with the other Hawaiian churches. I think one year, at least, they won first place but of course the Kawaiahao choir usually wins the first place. They're bigger, they have more people, and the larger number just makes it easier for them to do more brilliant things. And in the group, of course, they're likely to have more soloists and that sort of thing.

There was a club in Honolulu, when I came, of young girls--well, they were about my age, perhaps some a little

younger; some a little older--and they called it the Moani Music Club. They felt that they weren't quite advanced enough to be in the Morning Music Club and still they wanted to have some incentive for keeping up their music. Some of them were giving piano lessons. And this girl from here whom I had met first in Boston at the conservatory, of course, introduced me there, so I belonged to that.

M: Moani?

W: Moani. Moani.

M: How did they spell it, just M-O-A-N-I?

W: Well, it's just like Moana, wasn't it, except. . .

M: With an I.

W: Yes. Moani, I think, was the name. [It means "fragrance wafted on the breeze."]

M: Was the Morning Music Club such that there was some high standard that you had to hold to to become a member?

W: Well, we had to be able to play for the programs and they wanted us to play pretty well. I may have been about the youngest member because I had just come from the conservatory, you see, but these young girls in the Moani Club had not been to conservatories, at least long enough to get any diploma. Hadn't studied long. The one that I knew here had been there just a year. I don't know that she was even taking a full course but I think, perhaps, her family wanted to give her a year away and she wanted to take some music. And when she came back, she gave some private lessons but she hadn't studied long enough and seriously enough to really play for the Morning Music Club.

M: I see. Well you know, now they have one group of members that are performers and another group of members that are sort of listeners. (chuckles)

W: Yes, they call them associate members?

M: Yeh. Right.

W: Yes, but they didn't do that then. They would have had too many listeners and too few performers, you see, so they tried to get performers. I think they still do.

M: Yes, uh huh. One thing I don't have yet are your parents' names.

W: Whose names?

M: Your parents' names.

W: Oh, Walter H. Way was my father and my mother was Helena C. Way. Cadwell was her maiden name. Cadwell like Miss Cadwell at Punahou but we were not closely related at all. We didn't really trace a common ancestor at all.

And in Honolulu I think that there was a chamber music group, mostly strings, that were gradually grouped together and they tried to make a small orchestra and started what was really the beginning of the Honolulu Symphony. And at first, I understand, their concerts were in the--they may have called it the Mission Hall but it's not the very old buildings. It was a brick building that the City and County has taken over next to the City Hall. I think there's a low brick building on that same plot of ground.

M: Um. I think I know what you mean, yeh.

W: And when it was taken away from the. . . . Well, it was really built, I think, by the mission descendants.

M: Um hm.

END OF SIDE 1/1ST TAPE

M: Then where did you teach after you got back to Honolulu?

W: I went to McKinley and then over here at. . .(recorder goes off and comes on again)

M: Now that ought to be okay. Where were we? (chuckles)

W: I don't know. I think other people could tell better than I about the symphony and later developments.

M: Um hm. But tell me more about the kind of music department you had at McKinley, then.

W: Well, Paul Sanders had the bands and two orchestra classes of beginners and the more advanced orchestra and he had the military band and probably two others. That would have made five periods. And his sister and I assisted in the band work. We were supposed to take turns by weeks, helping the other. We'd have a free period and there were just the three of us most of the time. And the military band was really very good. 'Course the others were the beginners and the intermediate. They were all right for their level but not concert bands at all. And the orchestra was good enough so that they could play for the oper-

ettas that we put on. The first one we put on was "H.M.S. Pinafore" and the second one was "Pirates of Penzance" and then I think they put on "Patience," yes--Gilbert and Sullivan--and then we switched to others. We had Schubert's "Rosamund" and we had Flowtow's "Martha."

M: Wow! That's pretty ambitious.

W: Yes. And I went on leave 1936 and '37. I can't remember what they had but Mr. Sanders didn't seem to think it was a good plan to repeat. I always felt that it would have been all right to give one Gilbert and Sullivan every three years so that everybody in the music department could have the fun of working on Gilbert and Sullivan, but he didn't want to do that so he had to keep looking around for something else. And some of the modern things that are written just for schools aren't very satisfying to people who like better music because it's very seldom that a new writer produces anything that ranks as high as Gilbert and Sullivan in the comedy line, or Schubert or Flotow in the operatic. Of course, those are easy operas but I thought it was good training for the children to have the experience of that type.

M: Were they well-attended when you had them?

W: Yes, usually. I think we would have them two nights. Well at first, the McKinley Auditorium didn't have any seats in it. They had to bring in folding chairs, when I brought my boys over from Hilo for the contests, but they gradually got seats in there and the place would hold a little over two thousand.

But when you put on an opera--have you ever put one on?

M: Well, I've taken part in them.

W: Yes, well, practically everybody has some friends or relatives who want to come and so you need quite a big hall or a few performances to get them all in, so they were well-attended partly because we did have big choruses. And then we had to have other teachers help with the make-up and helping them dress, get the costumes on, things like that, but they wouldn't be working very much of the year. It was just, perhaps, three nights--dress rehearsals, two performances. And the teachers in the music department worked for months after school, you know, with the pupils --sometimes chorus rehearsals; sometimes the soloists--and evenings sometimes.

And over here, it was strange to us that pupils would not do one thing about their costumes. Now on the main-

land, we teachers had always provided our own costumes--that is, our parents had--and we wanted to be in the operas and our parents were willing to make them. Our mothers would make the costumes usually or they'd get them somehow and pay for them.

But over here a lot of them didn't want to be in the performance, especially the boys, and I found a good deal later--years later, during the war--well, that was ten years after some of them had been in the operas--that they really thought we weren't fair. In order to make them be in the operas, we had to say they wouldn't get credit for their course unless they took part in the opera because it was supposed to be a big part of their training, and they thought it wasn't fair to withhold credit if they didn't want to be in the opera. That was their attitude and they would not provide their costumes, so we had to see that they were made.

The Sanders had a very nice aunt who was over living with them, I think a year or two, and those years she worked on the costumes. Made a lot of them.

M: Hm. You'd think they'd want to be--be only too happy to take part in something like that.

W: Well, it hadn't been done, you see, and I suppose they didn't want to practice after school so often as we had to and some of them had sort of stage fright, but it was fun on the whole.

M: Where did the students at McKinley come from? At that time there weren't too many high schools.

W: No, that was the only public high school there. Well, they came from all over. Some came from the plantations every day and when it was the only one, of course, there were a good many of the Caucasians and I know those boys would come in on the train from the plantations and they'd walk from the railroad station up to McKinley. I don't know, I would think it must have been two miles. Maybe it wasn't. And of course there were a great many Orientals. I guess some of them came in from the country and others from the city. They would come on the buses or the parents could bring them if they had cars but when I came, way back in 1917, not very many people had autos anyway and we teachers usually used the trolley cars. We could hire taxis, though.

M: They were automobiles back then.

W: Yes. And after awhile they had Farrington High School and then they had. . .

M: You mean that McKinley was the only high school on this island?

W: Only public one, I think.

M: On this island. Hm.

W: I may be wrong about that but I don't remember that there was any other on this island when I came.

M: There was Kam [Kamehameha Schools] and Punahou and Iolani.

W: I can't remember. There may have been Iolani then because, of course, the Episcopal Church is very old here. And Mid-Pacific [Institute] is rather old.

M: Yes, that goes back that far.

W: And the girls' school that was. . .

M: St. Andrew's Priory.

W: What's the name of it?

M: The Priory. St. Andrew's Priory.

W: Oh, that's the Episcopal but I was thinking of the Mid-Pacific Institute for Orientals. And I remember once we had. . .(clock chimes three times). I suppose that'll be registered. (Lynda laughs) Once a music club that started in one of my piano classes went from McKinley up to Mid-Pacific and they gave them a program and then they came down to McKinley and gave us a program one time in our assembly in the auditorium.

M: Was there much exchange like that on a regular basis between private and public schools?

W: I don't know. I don't know. For a few years in the mid-thirties I had a good many very bright pupils and they were ambitious but over in Hilo I found the pupils eager to learn and it was partly because those of Japanese descent were urged by their parents to work. See, their parents, most of them--the majority of them--were workers. I suppose they came, at one time, to work in the plantation fields but then they became--oh, what would you call them? --the artisans, electricians, contractors, construction people, like that. But they wanted their children to have much better education than they had had and so some of them, I guess, kept the children in at night to study and they haven't been doing that lately. (Lynda laughs) Made

a big difference.

M: Yes.

W: But some of these, oh, I had some very, well, quite talented musicians in my piano classes for two or three years. I mean they practiced hard and they have since become teachers of piano and they have been players--soloists sometimes--I mean the first chair--in woodwinds and, well, there's one playing now, not the first chair I guess, in the cello section. I see him every time there's a performance and a very good clarinetist, very good bassoonist at one time from McKinley and they did very well with music along at that time.

Well then, I think that having Roosevelt as another high school took some of our good ones, not all. Some of them preferred to come to McKinley even if they could have gone to Roosevelt and they couldn't go to Roosevelt without passing a special English exam and some of them, although they were bright, just hadn't learned to speak good English so they weren't allowed to go to Roosevelt. But they were bright enough to learn if they wanted to, so.

M: Where did students like the bassoon player, who did he study with outside of the school?

W: Who?

M: Yes. Were there private teachers here for all the different instruments?

W: Yes. Yes. There was a girl named Tokiko Katsuki. She was the daughter of a doctor here who was a private pupil of mine at Punahou and she was very good. When I had her she was practically a beginner. She may have had a year before I had her, then I had her two years. But when I came back, I found that she had gone on and studied every year and perhaps gone to a conservatory or college like Oberlin, where they had a good music department, and had come back and was teaching piano. I think she's still teaching piano here.

And well, let's see now, there was a Elsa [Cross] Basler who was here in the thirties and on until, perhaps, the fifties. 1955. She didn't teach much after '55. She was getting a good deal older than I and I thought she was one of the best piano teachers in Honolulu.

And there was a Mrs. Cannon and one of her daughters was a solo violinist here. Mrs. Cannon taught piano.

M: Cannon. Sounds familiar.

W: One of her daughters, who did not study music, is here. Real estate agent now. Mrs. [William M.] Wilson. [Elizabeth Cannon was her maiden name.] But she didn't take up music.

Oh, there was a Miss Worth Mueller who taught piano way back when I was at Punahou. I think she taught in her own home in Manoa. 'Course they could take trolley cars to get up there. She was just off the trolley line.

M: Where did you live after you came back to Honolulu and started teaching at McKinley?

W: Oh, I lived in different places. My mother stayed on in Hilo awhile as the matron of the King's Daughters Home and I think the first place I lived was the Donna Hotel. Do you know where that was?

M: Somebody was telling me about that the other day.

W: Well, it's next to the Schuman Carriage Company on Beretania Street.

M: Where the present Schuman Carriage is?

W: Yes, um hm. When I was here first, where the Schuman Carriage Company is now there was a large house, two or three stories high, and it was the home of Governor [Charles J.] McCarthy. He was governor here in 1917. I don't know just when he stopped and started--started and stopped--but I remember that he was in that year. [June 22, 1918 to 1921.] Is that what I mean, way back there? '17. I think so. And his wife had the hotel and it was her private project. He had nothing to do with it and she wanted it understood that it was hers and she ran it and they had the best food in the city that you could buy, you know, at a restaurant and she did catering for big parties if the people wanted to pay for really nice food, nice catering.

And the rooms weren't so good. She owned, I think, three buildings--could have been only two--there on Beretania and they owned the land right straight through to the street behind it, Kinau. Their big house was where Schuman Carriage Company is and then these smaller houses, where they had roomers, were Waikiki side. And then they had the dining room--main dining room. That was the style of practically all the hotels here then.

The Moana [Hotel] had cottages across the road then and the Young Hotel was the only one I can think of that had all the rooms in one building. That was like a city hotel but all the others had a building with the office and dining room and then cottages around for the rooms.

M: Um hm. And Mrs. McCarthy ran this. It was a profit-making business.

W: Yes. Oh, yes. That was her business. She may have had it before he was governor and she kept it quite a long time afterward too. And they had four daughters--or was it five?--and all but one married and they used to come and eat in the dining room sometimes, bring their children as babies--small babies. And I often think of how they trained those babies to keep still in the dining room. If a baby started to cry, they'd simply get up and walk out with it and perhaps later they'd come back with the baby and the baby'd be quiet. But if they did that just two or three nights, the baby learned and never made any more noise. (Lynda chuckles) I go to restaurants a great deal of my life here in Honolulu--I have gone out for lunches at least; perhaps get my own breakfast and dinner--but, oh, I'm so often annoyed by these babies that will yell and pick up spoons and pound on the table. And it isn't necessary if they just take the trouble once in awhile to take the baby out, he'd learn that wasn't done, in public anyway. A school teacher talking. (Lynda laughs)

And then I stayed at the Pleasanton Hotel. That's where Fernhurst [YWCA Residence] is now [at 1566 Wilder Avenue] and there was a big house that belonged to the Isenberg family. You know there's a street named for them and people call it Isenberg [with a long I] quite often but it's supposed to be Isenberg [with a long E sound]. And then they had cottages--well, two-story buildings, some of them rather big--or was it three stories? I don't know. They had so many buildings in that square.

M: Behind Fernhurst? ("And a swimming pool," W says)

W: Yes, up toward the Lutheran Church. I think, perhaps, the Isenbergs owned that whole block. At least they owned most of it.

M: There's an ancient old building still there. I wonder if that's the same.

W: They've been tearing down some of the buildings lately, I think, putting in some new ones behind Fernhurst, maybe.

M: Yeh, uh huh. But I know that until fairly recently, last year or so, there were these old frame buildings.

W: Yes. Yes.

M: Those are the ones you're talking about?

W: Yes. Yes, I had a room in one of them up the street there but the dining room was in the main building down on the corner and their food wasn't so good but I think perhaps the rooms were better. (Lynda laughs) And all the hotels were like that.

There was a Davenport. The Davenport, I think, was where the Shriners' Hospital [For Crippled Children] is now [at 1310 Punahou Street] or just next to it. Which was it? I think where the Shriners' Hospital is.

M: Oh, yes. Across the street from Central Union [Church].

W: Yes, behind the Mormon [Tabernacle] corner. And there was a Colonial. Oh, ever so many rather small hotels, all that same style.

M: These were sort of residential hotels for local people.

W: Yes. Yes, they were in the residential area, you see. Punahou.

M: Yeh, that's what surprised me when you talked about them because I always think of hotels being for people that are coming into town for a day or so, but these were places where you actually lived year round.

W: Yes, got all our meals.

M: But the business center and everything was way downtown.

W: Yes, around the Young Hotel.

M: Yeh.

W: Oh, and there was Child's. Is there a Child's Hotel now?

M: No, not that I know of.

W: Well, there was a hotel--city hotel--that was cheaper than the Young on Fort Street. [The Blaisdell Hotel, perhaps.]

M: Oh, someone was telling me about living there. Yes, the Child's. That's right. Um hm. I guess in those days a lot of people did just live in hotels. They didn't rent homes or buy homes.

W: No. No, the homes in residential sections, there weren't tiny homes as a rule and teachers wouldn't want to take a house unless there were a few of them but quite a number did live in Waikiki in some of the one-story bungalows that are across the street from Halekulani [Hotel], all

along in there. Are those all torn down now?

M: Uh huh. (chuckles) A long time.

W: And there were bungalow-types all the way up--what's that street? Not Saratoga. Well, on Saratoga [Road]. What's the next one? Lewers [Street]. Lots of teachers lived there at one time.

M: Some of the ones on Saratoga are still there.

W: If there were two bedrooms, there'd be four teachers and if there were three bedrooms, there'd be six teachers and they would take turns getting meals.

M: Uh huh. You had married teachers, though. You didn't have any rule here about having to be single.

W: Well, these would be single teachers that would get together.

M: But you didn't have to be single in order to be a teacher.

W: Oh, no. The married teachers probably would get a small cottage somewhere. They called them cottages. They weren't very well filled. You know, single wall? Sometimes you could see cracks out on the outside. (Lynda chuckles) Rain would come in in a bad storm. (long pause)

M: Anything else occur to you, offhand?

W: Well, Theodore Richards was an important person in sponsoring musical things. He paid, or he underwrote the contests they had for all the public school or all the boys' choruses, so that if they didn't take in enough money from the people who came to hear it when tickets were sold, he would pay the rest, you see. But after awhile he stopped because not very many did come to hear these contests and he felt that he'd rather use his money in a way where more people would enjoy whatever was offered. And then he also spent money to send some talented young Hawaiians to the mainland to study voice and when they came back, he would sponsor them in a concert there in that Mission Hall, next to the City Hall buildings.

M: Were there other people that were sort of patrons that you recall?

W: Well, I think the Athertons--Frank Atherton was. I knew Frank Atherton slightly. And his wife's sister was over here quite awhile--her last name was Simpson--teaching

violin. I don't know whether she was one of the teachers at Punahou regularly or whether she gave private lessons entirely. She was here a good many years and they definitely were interested in music, all the Athertons. Or the Frank Athertons. I don't know much of anything about the Charles Athertons.

[Frank Cooke Atherton married Eleanor Alice Simpson. Her sister, Mariette Simpson, taught violin at Punahou School from 1933 to 1940.]

Oh, and there was the Gleemen organization. That was old.

M: What was it?

W: Gleemen?

M: Yes.

W: Well, I thought they'd still been singing lately.

M: Maybe they have.

W: They were men adults who got together and that organization ran for more than fifty years, I think, and may still be running. I don't know. The Livingston brothers, who were real estate men, were very active in that and they sang in Central Union [Church] choir for years and years, maybe nearly fifty or something like that. And they were very much interested in the boys' chorus contest too. I don't know that they are paid for any of it but they were interested in taking the boys around in private cars, showing them the city. Did their part that way, you see, entertaining these boys who were singing. And the Gleemen had given a concert every year--a public concert. Used to be, I think, at the art academy [Honolulu Academy of Arts] some years. I've heard them there and I don't know where they're giving their concerts now, if they're still giving them, but in--oh, I can't remember now what year; one year I was playing at the Lutheran church--Missouri Synod, the one up in the University [of Hawaii] section [Our Redeemer Lutheran Church]--and a Lutheran, who had a beautiful low bass voice came into the choir for awhile and he sang with the Gleemen and helped with the bass. I always like a good low bass as a foundation for the rest of the chorus.

M: Did you play at different churches then?

W: Yes. Every time I took a trip to the mainland or around the world or in Europe or in New Zealand or anywhere, I gave up my position and told them not to hold it, then when I came back I'd get a new position. But I liked to

do that because there are nice people in all churches. But I've always been interested in comparative religions and philosophy. I started asking questions about philosophy when I was in high school and then I took some things I didn't have to in college because I was interested. But it takes a lot of time to major in music. Well, it wasn't really a major. They didn't have a big enough department at Mount Holyoke to call it a major but I took plenty of hours for a major and had had two majors besides. And then they required one quarter of the work. There were stiff courses at Mount Holyoke. Well anyway, I like philosophy and comparative religions and so I like to go around from church to church.

M: This is all organ playing you were doing.

W: Yes, church organs. Or after the war, there were a great many of the electronic organs; and during the war, I volunteered to help the USO [United Service Organizations] and they put a lot of us organists and vocal soloists on the Sunday work. They sent us out with one accompanist and one singer to the different chapels or chaplains around the island and the army called for us, sometimes in the big command cars.

I remember going over the Pali one Sunday morning with Mrs. [John P.] Erdman, who was a very nice singer. She was Mrs. [Walter Francis] Frear's sister and she's still living but not able to sing. [Mrs. Erdman was Marion E. Dillingham and Mrs. Frear was Mary Emma Dillingham prior to their respective marriages.] The day before, the top had been blown off going over the Pali, so there we were, perched in the back seat of a big. . . (Lynda chuckles)

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BEGINNING OF SIDE 1/2ND TAPE

And we'd sing and play for as many as four services on a Sunday sometimes, one right after the other, as fast as they could transport us from one place to another (Lynda chuckles), and one might be a post chapel like Fort Kamehameha, Fort Ruger--no, I mean [Fort] Shafter. And one might be at someplace where they had quite a number of buildings and we'd be in a very bare hall, perhaps with a little pump organ, where I had to pump all the time and if you're playing one of those and it isn't anchored well, as you pump it begins to go away from you (Lynda chuckles) and you have to get it anchored there. And then the next thing is, as you pump, your chair begins to go back and you have to get that anchored.

And then one place sometimes would be along the beach in a keawe grove for covering, you know. There'd be anti-aircraft guns there. And then sometimes up in the hills behind Wheeler Field and--oh, what's the post up there? Army post.

M: You don't mean Schofield?

W: Schofield [Barracks], um hm. And the men would sit out on the bleachers sometimes on the hills, toward the end [of World War II] anyway when they weren't afraid that the enemy would be coming over our island. And toward the end, Mrs. Erdman and I were there and at the end of the service the chaplain asked us to stand beside him and shake hands with the men as they left because they were being sent out to the Western Pacific at that time as replacements and, well, many of them thought that they'd never get back to American soil again. The mortality was pretty high at that time, you know, and the chaplain said, "You're probably the last white women that they'll see or shake hands with anyway in their lives," and it was quite a sobering experience. And those men. . .

M: That must have been a really interesting time for you.

W: Yes. And some of the chaplains would have--they would know which men were really good church people and they would have, perhaps, a five o'clock service and they were very glad to have presents from any of us civiilians who were working with them, like cookies or homemade candy, and they would give them to these men who came to the five o'clock service. (laughter)

And some of the people, if they had big homes, would invite the chaplain and men that he chose to come for, oh, supper perhaps by the beach. Some of them owned houses by the beach. I won't mention too many names. I don't know whether they'd like it or not.

M: Uh huh, that's okay. (pause) When did you retire?

W: Oh, I retired in fifty-something [the 1950's]. I retired before I had to because I got disgusted with the behavior and the attitude after the war in the seniors. I taught seniors mostly and that's English and history. They all had the feeling that. . . . Well, right after the war some of them came back. They had left to work during the war when they could get jobs. They had the feeling that without a diploma from high school they could make more money than teachers did--and they did--and so they didn't care whether they got a diploma or not. They were just loafing and their parents were supporting them in school,

probably hoping that they'd do well, but oh, it was an awful attitude. You couldn't get them to do any homework. They'd just, well, they'd lie down in their seats practically, spread their feet out and perhaps put their heads back and defy you to teach them anything or make them study. And I had been trained really to earn my living at music and so I thought I'd try it. (Lynda chuckles) And so I quit early.

At that time I went out to a navy housing unit out toward Pearl Harbor. It was just on the Honolulu side of Hickam [Field]. Navy Housing #2, perhaps. I forget exactly what it was. And I stayed there two years before I went traveling. And I had. . .

M: What were you doing out there?

W: Playing the organ.

M: Oh. Oh.

W: After I quit school I had more time for the organ and I expected to pick up pupils, you see, from the congregation. That is, children of the people that attended. That was logical. That usually happens and usually a church organist is given permission to teach piano in the church building; use the church piano. It goes along with the contract because it's arranged for. Perhaps you get less salary but anyway that's customary to do something like that, so I had a good many pupils out there, second year especially. And because I found that the navy wives were very energetic and anxious to have their children have the best education they could, under the difficulty of having to move often, which isn't good for the children. And as soon as they got to Honolulu, they'd begin to arrange for hula lessons and piano lessons and swimming lessons and all sorts of things. And of course they could get piano lessons anywhere but the swimming and the hula and other things they might think of would be different here. But almost immediately they had schedules arranged for all their children and they were very busy taking them around to these various lessons every week and I enjoyed knowing people there. I think that they don't make friends very much because they know they can't stay long and if you get very friendly with people it hurts to leave them but they were very pleasant to work with and ambitious for their children.

M: Yeh, it must be terribly hard. I would hate that kind of a life. It takes a special kind of people to be able to do it. (long pause) Well, I've sort of over-stayed the hour I promised you. It's three-thirty.

W: Well, I may have wasted your time. I don't know.

M: Not at all. No. I think that some of the things you told me are totally different . . .

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END OF INTERVIEW

Transcribed and edited by Katherine B. Allen, 1979

Subject Index

# THE WATUMULL FOUNDATION ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

In May 1971, the Watumull Foundation initiated an Oral History Project.

The project was formally begun on June 24, 1971 when Katherine B. Allen was selected to interview kamaainas and longtime residents of Hawaii in order to preserve their experiences and knowledge. In July, Lynda Mair joined the staff as an interviewer.

During the next seventeen months, eighty-eight persons were interviewed. Most of these taped oral histories were transcribed by November 30, 1972.

Then the project was suspended indefinitely due to the retirement of the foundation's chairman, Ellen Jensen Watumull.

In February 1979, the project was reactivated and Miss Allen was recalled as director and editor.

Three sets of the final transcripts, typed on acid-free Permalife Bond paper, have been deposited respectively in the Archives of Hawaii, the Hamilton Library at the University of Hawaii, and the Cooke Library at Punahou School.